ond half, in which a punch-drunk Tharp takes on the eight men one by one, while the others serve as a down-and-out chorus. Still feisty, she spars with her first partner. They even slip into a social-dance embrace, but physical and emotional exhaustion rapidly overwhelm her. In a laconic, melancholy duet, a tender young man tries to support, lift, even caress her, but she's past noticing. She meets her next partner by crashing into him; he tries to hoist her to her feet, but she keeps sprawling. Finally her inert body is shunted through the air from one man to another while the rest shamble along, dazed, about to give up forever, extending an arm from the elbow as they meet, with a feeble wave that might be either recognition or dismissal.

Tharp makes a game comeback at the end, battered but dancing again, the throbbing music calling her beleaguered muscles into play. Finally, in silhouette, she turns her back to the audience to bow to a line of footlights that blazes suddenly upstage. Naturally, we are to read this piece as autobiography. Apart from the clues planted in the ballet itself, the choreographer's recent interviews confess it. The very theatricality of *Fait Accompli* somehow works to undermine our sympathy. Many of the visual and choreographic ideas are familiar to faithful dance-goers. Seeing them so cleverly combined and so stunningly displayed—production is everything here—has us admiring the maker's skill, not feeling the poignancy of her tale.

Tharp has an undeniably didactic turn of mind. Even as she explores a vernacular, such as ballroom dancing, for its lush local color, she elucidates it for us as well. In another new work, *Telemann*, to the Concerto in E for Flute, Oboe d'amore, and Violin, she tells us what it's like at the ballet. She should know. Since 1973, when she made *Deuce Coupe* for the Joffrey, through her several pieces for that company and for American Ballet Theatre, each one more in the ballet idiom, she's been grappling with the arcane world of classical dancing; for years she's said that Balanchine was her real mentor.

Telemann is a ballet blanc, as pure and white in its movement as it is in its dress. Loquasto has given the three male cavaliers loose pullover shirts and cut-off trousers, their women flimsy harem pants topped with sheer tunics. One bodice sports fairy-wing ruffles at the shoulder—surely a reference to the sylphs. The dancing they do is indeed as fleet and delicate as Fokine's airy vision, and highly formal in its structure. Midway through the piece, Tharp rediscovers symmetry and declares it a singular virtue for our haphazard times.

The first half of the work investigates the nature of the pas de deux and employs many of the conventional beauties of the genre, but in passing, as it were, so you miss one if you blink. The traditional manners of the classical duet—boy gallantly supports girl—are stated appreciatively, then instantly dislocated. As his lady begins sloping downward in a plunging arabesque, a gentleman steals away for an eight-second bravura frolic of his own, then assists the balance of her descent with suave sobriety. Another fellow displays his ballerina with the requisite aplomb, unperturbed by the fact that she is upside down, her feet beating neat entrechats in front of his nose.

The second part of the ballet anatomizes the solo. One dancer after another steps out in front of his colleagues for a display of formidable prowess, then slips quietly back into the ensemble, which moves gently in the background like an eternally flowing river. Suddenly one sees the moral implied: A soloist is just someone out of the corps who happens to be dancing alone. This, of course, is exactly the way Tharp's stunning company is organized. There is no hierarchy of ability among these deft, personable dancers, only one of seniority; the longer they work with Tharp, the better they get. ■

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/xzxj0004